



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF DENVER

September 12, 2018

Mr. George D. Karcazes, President
Orthodox Christian Laity
PO Box 6954
West Palm Beach, FL 33405-6954

Dear Mr. Karcazes,

I recently received the Fall 2018 issue of your periodical which I enjoyed very much. As I read the letter signed by you and Mr. George Matsoukas, the Executive Director, my mind went back many years in reading how our Church was established in the United States of America. Truly, it is an amazing history.

The introduction of the laity into the administration of our parishes in our nation was introduced and established by Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras who earlier was the Archbishop of our Archdiocese from 1931 to 1948. The family or community spirit which he had established, was sustained by Archbishop Iakovos, of blessed memory, who was our archbishop from 1959 to 1996, when he retired from his holy ministry. Having served as the chancellor at the archdiocese from 1986 to 1992, I can assert to the fact that the Archdiocese was administered more as family rather than an impersonal corporation, as has appeared in recent years.

The problem with our Greek Orthodox Church today is that many cradle Orthodox have not experienced the Church as family as I did in my younger years. Fortunately, many of our converts to the Church who have recognized our Church as the uninterrupted continuity of the Church which our Lord and God Jesus Christ established through His voluntary crucifixion, His burial, and His glorious resurrection, have a wealth of knowledge and sincere faith which they share with others. To them, the Church is seen more as a family rather than as an institution.

In stressing the fact that the Church is the spiritual family under God, this reality is in harmony with the fact that God is Agape (love). And wherever love exists, there is no need to stress constant rules and regulations, which were used during the time wherein the Old Testament was the guide to the teachings imparted by God for His people. With our Lord Jesus Christ coming into the world, we see that His sole purpose, aside from destroying the reality of death upon humanity, was to correct His distorted icons, His people, and make them ready for His coming Kingdom.

I stress these realities in order to suggest that certain words and expressions in the description of the Orthodox Christian Laity in your page, 1989 ORIGINAL QUESTIONS & ANSWERS, can take away from the minds of some readers the fact that the only authority figure of our faith is our Lord and God Jesus Christ. This is why I would consider it more acceptable for those who read the description of the Orthodox Christian Laity that today the words like independent, authority, and power, are not necessary. It is true that when your Christian fellowship began in the 1980's in Chicago, which I applauded as the then Chancellor of the Chicago Diocese, such words had to be used. I say these things for only one reason, and that is because I encounter some people even today who unfortunately have negative thoughts about the Orthodox Christian Laity, which they had from thirty years ago. I ask you for only one thing regarding your vital fellowship, and that is that it is not time yet to suggest any kind of administrative unity among the family of canonical Orthodox Christian jurisdictions in our country. As a member of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the United States, I can accurately say that there are several Orthodox hierarchs in the Assembly who feel that they are primarily responsible to their hierarchical leaders in Europe where they served before coming to this country. As a present member of your Advisory Board, I feel that I should share these thoughts with you.

May our Lord continue to bless you and your Fellowship, which is a vital and timely organization, as the Holy Spirit inspires and leads us to that holy occasion when all of our canonical jurisdictions will be living the oneness of our Lord's holy Church, which He established for our salvation.

With love in Christ,

+Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver